

# Cherokee Indian Health Survey

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These characters in the Cherokee alphabet mean "Are you well?" They are used as a greeting.

TO ASSESS health conditions among the Cherokee Indians in North Carolina, a multiphasic survey was conducted at the reservation in April 1955. It was a joint venture of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Public Health Service, the North Carolina State Board of Health, the Jackson-Macon-Swain District Health Department of North Carolina, and the University of North Carolina School of Public Health.

Participation in the survey was limited to reservation inhabitants 15 years old or over. During a 2-day examination period, about 1,000

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*Dr. Cameron, associate professor of public health administration, University of North Carolina School of Public Health, was director of the team of Federal, State, local, and volunteer health workers who planned and conducted the screening project at the Cherokee Indian Reservation. His avocational interest in photography has made possible this picture story of the project.*

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of the 2,500 to 3,500 residents received the various tests. The entire group received chest X-rays and serologic tests for syphilis, as well as height and weight determinations. Those 15 to 25 years were examined for blood vitamin levels. Those 25 years or over were asked for information about their diets and received diabetes screening tests.

In addition to a team of workers from the Federal, State, and local health agencies, more than 50 volunteer workers from the reservation and surrounding communities participated in the survey. Success of the operation is credited to the excellent presurvey educational and informational program conducted by personnel of the district health department and the Cherokee Indian Agency.

Results from the survey confirm that the Cherokees in North Carolina enjoy a state of health superior to that of many other Indian groups in the United States. The health of this group compares favorably with that of other residents of the mountainous area along the Tennessee-North Carolina boundary.



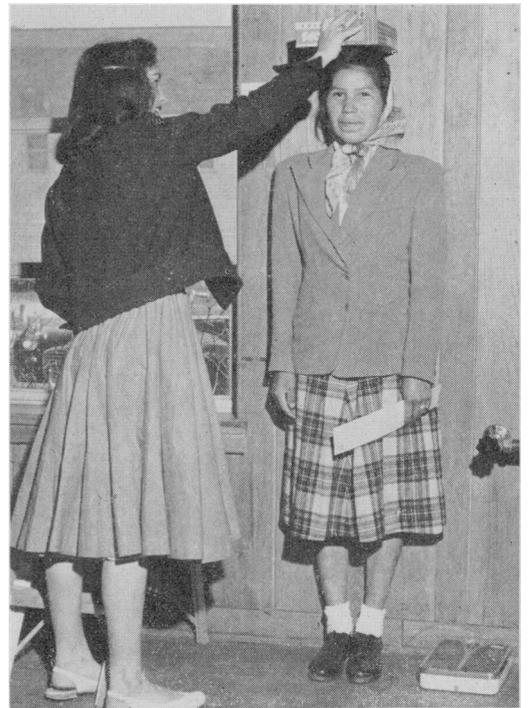
The survey site was the arts and crafts building located on the reservation at Cherokee Indian Village. Facilities for determining heights and weights, taking nutritional histories, and taking and processing blood samples were set up inside. Mobile X-ray units from the North Carolina State Board of Health were parked behind the building.

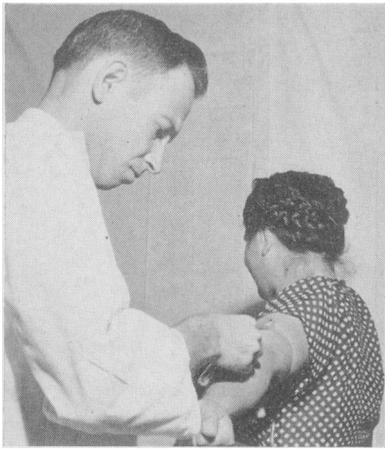
Indian Agency school buses carried many participants to and from the survey site. Entire families came and the scene rapidly assumed a festive air.

The weight and height of each participant was determined by volunteer workers. Results are being compared with a study of weights and heights of the Cherokees made some 30 years ago.

Nutritionists from the North Carolina State Board of Health recorded diet histories for all participants being screened for diabetes.

The participants queued up preparatory to entering 1 of 3 curtained-off areas where blood samples were drawn for diabetes screening, serologic tests for syphilis, and determination of serum vitamin levels.

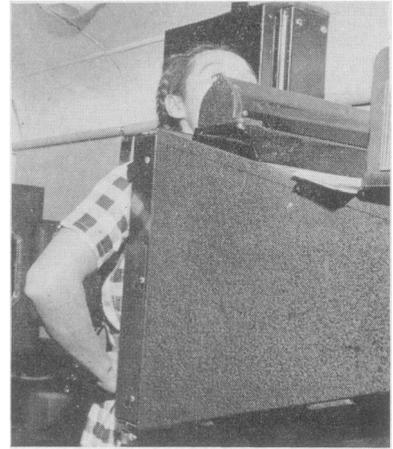




A Public Health Service officer assigned to the North Carolina State Board of Health took blood samples. Of 973 serologic tests for syphilis, only 5 were positive. Four of these cases were found to have had adequate treatment.



The Hewson Clinotron, loaned by the Public Health Service, was used in screening blood samples for elevated blood sugar. Of 761 persons over 25 years of age, 24 diabetes suspects were singled out. Followup on these is in progress.



Final step was a chest X-ray. More than 90 percent of the 1,020 persons examined were essentially negative. Of 31 persons selected for rescreening, 16 were found to have tuberculous infection, but all were in an inactive stage.



Blood specimens were frozen and then shipped to the University of North Carolina, where serum vitamin A and C determinations were done. Preliminary reports indicate that the group surveyed tends to have a lower plasma ascorbic acid level than certain well-nourished population groups in the northeastern States. The serum vitamin A levels compare favorably with results obtained in other regional surveys.

Although not participants in the survey, Cherokee youngsters exhibited great interest in the activities. The two pictured are watching their parents as they progress through the survey line. →

